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LIFE DEAR AND HELPFUL:

BY

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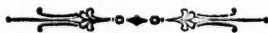


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LIFE DEAR AND HELPFUL.



REV. ROBERT C. MOFFAT.



Memorial Gleanings of Twenty-Third year of
Pastorate.



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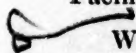


ET John Ruskin speak. His venerable father has passed away at the ripe old age of seventy five. He rests in the quiet God's acre of Shirley. A plain marble slab tells of the honored dead beneath. No hopeless heathen symbol pollutes that grave, but there we read the tribute of the cultured son to his father's christian work. It is strikingly suggestive, "His memory is very dear and helpful." That his memory should be very dear is surely natural, but that his memory should be very helpful is a rich theme for earnest thought. His life very helpful to such a son, then he was no common man. That John Ruskin should cause it to be engraved there, shows how very much he felt he was indebted to his father's training and his father's life.

Life, helpful, very helpful, lies within the reach of every Christian. The world from the yearning hearts of the discouraged, the adrift, the erring, is ever crying out "Help" oh for the sake of Jesus, help me. One warm grip from thy hand, one decided word from thy lip, and some undecided one decides for God and the eternal right. You read with thrilling interest the story of Isandula and Rorkes Drift, and you see there in those sad groups of the unburied dead, that wherever some brave man made his stand, there others gathered shoulder to shoulder and fell side by side.

No decided christian life is ever lived in vain, the flower may not bloom for a generation, but burst it will, the seed may not ripen into harvest until rooted in some far away land, but ripen it will. Tearful sower remember, nothing done for Christ is ever lost.

Very helpful Fathers are sorely needed from the Atlantic to the Pacific.



Without them the street corners will turn out its shoals of Godless graduates. Does the father despise the lowly prayer meeting, then we

may be sure the sons will be the leaders in everything vile and unmanly. But with very helpful fathers the home becomes a power vital with Godwardness and Godlikeness. How suggestive the boyish answer to the question "Is your father a christian?" "Well I don't know, but he is not working much at it just now." It was a very foolish question to put to a child, yet that answer gives a fearfully vivid picture of sad sad home life.

How very different when another boy heard his godly father charged with some atrocious sin, with one indignant glance he calmly looked the slanderer in the face and calmly said "You great daft thing you," and scornfully turned on his heel and walked away. Very foolish fathers may urge their minister to give their wayward sons "a good talking." No, the better way is, let the father be a very helpful one to his sons in all manhood and true piety, and the day will come when those same sons will say "Thank God I had such a noble father."

If a father's piety is worth a straw the fruit will be family salvation.

The answer of Dr. Reid the founder of so many noble Asylums, to one of his sons who had asked for some materials for the writing of of his father's life, is replete with thought to every working father. "A. R. I was born yesterday. I shall die tomorrow, and I must not spend to-day in telling what I have done, but in doing what I may for him who has done all for me."

Very helpful mothers are also sorely needed everywhere. Frivolous mothers, overwrought mothers, are children to be loathed, to be thought a curse! Queenly motherhood joyously welcomes the God-sent and lovingly helps, the dearest to start aright from a mother's knee to the throne of God. Culture and accomplishments have their uses and their place. but the true glory of the house-mother is, when her memory is very dear and helpful. The daughters left may toil through life in uncultured obscurity, or they may rise to fame and fortune, but there is ever before them the sainted mother. Did she bend her knee in darkest hours they do it. Had she hallowed songs for the cradle and the sanctuary, so have they. Is her memory very dear and helpful, so assuredly will be theirs.

Is a Garfield inaugurated as President amid all the splendour of Washington. then what more noble and manly for a son to do than to

give the first kiss of love to the dear old grey-haired mother, who had so bravely fought the awfully stern battle of life for her fatherless boy. Her son's heart, her son's love, and the sower's tears are all forgotten in the mother's joy.

Ministers very dear and helpful are urgently needed. The present cry is, "Give us popular men for the pulpit, the platform, and the parlour.

Deep toned piety may be taken for granted or tolerated, men are wanted to fill the pews, but the age terribly needs men who will fill the heart. The chiselled sentences of the elocutionist may be admired for a pastorate beautifully short, but where are the spiritual giants going forth from the Churches to win the world to a glorified Redeemer?

And if that life is truly in earnest, then in some coming year, that dying father may get his last glimpse of his grand life-work, family religion, ripening for family salvation. It was once asked. "Is the sermon done already?" "It is finished; but it is not done yet" was the thoughtful answer. Then let this be the glorious beginning to you, oh father, "Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy." And then will be seen in the far west, as in the far east, another priest of the old school, surrounded by godly sons, heirs of the new life, the "King's Own" for work and worship evermore.

No doubt it is easier to raise mushrooms than veteran christians but souls in life earnest must have helpful ministers. Men whose every sermon is an inspiration to the man longing for a better life, men whose whole life is a living benediction. Unless our pulpits are filled with such helpful pastors, what is to be the destiny of the weak the tempted, the fallen? Wisely we honor the power and the experience of our grey haired Judges, Physicians, and Statesmen, but over many a pulpit may it be written. "No grey hair need apply."

I have heard many a soldier tell the story of his life in the long winter nights, but it was always the story of the battle-scarred veteran that moved the most. And this I know as a verity that Christ's ministers who have been most helpful to my own soul life were fathers who had grown grey in the master's work. The young minister full of consecrated enthusiasm has his own place and power, but in the saintly life behind the words, there lies a secret of far reaching helpfulness,

The glory of the ministry lies not in its power to please to fascinate, but to sway, to bring, to mould, to help Godward. The brilliant sermon may be forgotten in a week, the spiritual impulse given will last for eternity. The polished sentences may be admired and praised, but the men saved by the strong grip of their minister's hand and life, look up in his face and feel, but for him I had been an utter wreck. When uncle John Vassar rose from his knees after a most touching prayer by the side of the coffin of his old minister, in words of deepest emotion he declared "Under God I owe all that I am to this man."

Friends helpful are needed. 'Tis like a breeze of ocean air to read the helpful words and deeds of the men and women who have gone before. What young man can forget the story of how the generous Jonathan strengthened David's hands in God. It was an hour dark as midnight to David, but there a fresh start was taken in the upward life, no wonder that Jonathan's memory was peculiarly dear and helpful. Does eloquent Apollos need the curtain lifted and the glory of Jesus revealed, then God will bring him to the warm hearts of Aquila and Priscilla. No harsh criticism, no iceberg isolation, nay but the yearning heart, willingly and lovingly revealing all the sublime wonders of Calvary and Pentecost. Would he ever forget those humble helpers? No, never.

Books helpful. Have not many before them the memory of some precious book which has been specially helpful in life's past. Has not the weary pilgrim found his progress wonderfully helped, has not the venerable patriarch enjoyed many a saintly rest. Have not souls stricken with doubt and apathy found in still hours on the Mount of Olives faith and triumphant hope. Whatever men of the world demand from their literature, Christian literature imperatively needs to be helpful.

Has any mortal helped you to a nobler life, then speak out your thanks, it may cheer some darkly brooding hour, when men are tempted to ask "What good have I ever done?"


Hear a woman's tersely ringing words:

"What worth in eulogies blindest breath.
When whispered in ears that are hushed in death
No, no, if you have but a word of cheer,
Speak it while I am alive to hear."

Whatever you may aspire to be, to do, have the ever glowing ambition to leave the world better than you found it. Do you aspire to eminent usefulness? God's highway is pre-eminent piety.

Then living here or glorified hereafter, some grateful heart may look back and say "Thy memory is very dear and helpful."

A PRIEST OF THE OLD SCHOOL.

ANTED, immediately, a Christian priest for every Presbyterian family.

We enter some household where family worship should reverently close the day, and we stand awed and humbled. The family altar is in ruins, the altar fires are all dark, no father kneels by the old arm chair, no household group get first sweet glimpses of the crucified. The children are on the streets or worse, and as one by one they reach that home in which they eat and sleep, exhausted or disgusted by the world's follies, a family altar, a few sweet moments with a yearning Saviour are moral impossibilities.

But now let us look at

A PATRIARCH'S FAMILY IN THE FAR EAST.

There are ten in Job's family circle to start in the journey of life. Shall they go out untaught, untrained, to be wrecked by the first subtle temptation, or shall they go out taking the hand of their father's God, more than conquerors through life. There may be the aristocracy of wealth, but where there is also the aristocracy of godly culture, then are the loved ones fit either for tent or city.

It is one thing to be hungry to see life, fast, flippant and godless ; it is another thing to live life manly, nobly and godlike. It is one thing to see the fated "Waubuno" tossed amid rocks and storms, leaving no one to tell of that awful hour, but it would be another thing to see her held by anchor firm and steadfast. So the sons one by one push out into life for themselves, and there is always room east or west for the right men. And now the great question comes, shall it be as drudges, toiling sordidly for pelf and wealth, or shall it be patriarchal life of the noblest type—wherever a tent there an altar. The "Cottar's Saturday Night," may either be a theme for godless mockery, or an abiding inspiration for an intensely practical life. Away then with all

whining about the indifference of the young to religion, and let every Christian father be a warm hearted Christian priest, and God assured-
will make good the covenant blessing.

Let us also glance at a

PATRIARCH'S GREATEST FEAR.

With some fathers their great fear is that their sons may not be able to reach wealth and position, with others that they may bring disgrace upon the family name. But with Job it was this fear, unhappily so rare, "It may be that my sons have cursed God in their hearts." We have not the slightest hint that they did ever curse God in heart or speech. Yet if the old may too often forget God, so may the young and should the heart be left unfilled and unguarded, then from life and lip there will be surely seen a viperous procession. Should the son forget his God well may a father fear, and such a terrible danger confronts every father with this question, What plans do you take to keep your children near to God? The father who continuously leaves his own altar fires black out is surely preparing for his own sons not a benediction but a malediction.

Let us further notice a

PATRIARCH'S MOST IMPORTANT BUSINESS.

We have everywhere professing Christian fathers who are busy about everything but the salvation of their own children. Fathers, your noblest work on earth is to bring your children to Jesus Christ. Let no one rob you of the eternal honour, and should you have been neglectful in the past, then listen even to a worldly poet, "'Tis time to live if I grow old." Job's first business was to care for his children's souls, for their souls' prosperity, for if not that, then soul declension and soul ruin. "A burnt offering for each," not only a father's God, but a personal Saviour for every child.

Thrice happy is every son when he can honestly say, "Yea, mine own God is He." And mark well how prompt these sacrifices. "early in the morning," no waiting, the motto is short accounts with God. An Eli may feebly remonstrate with his godless sons—Ah, it is too late, too late, the battle of "Mansoul" is lost and Ichabod is a flaming beacon forever.

It would be a strange notice to post on the door of every Presby-

terian church, Wanted a Christian priest, a church in every house ; wages sure ; the paymaster Jesus Christ." For in many a family we see fatal barriers in the way of sons coming to a living Saviour. In one it is a father's indifference, in another it is a father's godless example, in another it is a fathers incessant fault-finding with the minister or the church, The assertion is often recklessly made that Job was not yet a Christian ; but even if he were not, he sets before every true Christian the great truth that the fathers most important business in this world is that his sons may be the true and pure sons of God Almighty.

Let us again mark well a

PATRIARCH'S LIFE-LONG RELIGION.

We have heard of a man who had married a godless bride giving up family religion lest it should offend her. The moment she knew it she quietly remarked that she thought she had married a Christian ; but that the only Christian she could love and respect was one faithful and true to his God. Need I add, that night two souls side by side worshipped God. Oh weary mother, to-night give the family bible into the hand of him who swore to love and cherish you, and plead with him for your children's sake, for your sake, for Christ's sake to be a man, a high priest for life before God's altar. Did Job's religion soon pass away ? No ! There may be utter poverty, terrific bereavement, passionate prayer to curse his God, but the anchor held. With Job eternal life had but one meaning, eternal life and nothing else. And wherever you have such a religion consecrating the dear old family altar, then you have one of God's mightiest powers to hold the scattered ones. A grey haired father walking with God, a saintly mother in that old arm-chair are sights never to be forgotten. These sons may go out into the world, but the prayers of such a father wrestling with a covenant-keeping God can reach their heart, either in the land of Uz or on the far Saskatchewan.

And many a sacred memory comes back of the lowly family altar, the dear old church, the much loved minister of our childhood, and the seed long buried springs into vigorous life, useful and eternal. The special want of this busy age is a religion which, starting from the family altar will stand the tear and wear of the longest life, ever grow-

in every house ; ng in every Christian grace. For years the family may be unbroken, by a family we but soon death enters, all the ten are gone, swept by one strange blow. g Saviour. In Would Job then in that dark hour regret those sacrifices, these prayers, these years of godly example? Regret them, no, the very thought were madness.

Fathers, would you hold high office in God's sight, be God's high priest in your own families? We have religious life in many a public form, but never forget the dear home vineyard; it is your sacred trust, see to it that it is well kept. If living piety fills the home there is no fear of the Church; if the altar fires are all aglow there is no fear of the family; if the blood is sprinkled on every conscience there is no fear of the outgoings of every son's life. I urge upon you in the strongest language your personal accountability to God and to your family. Would it not be an overwhelming shame, if before God and the world, one after another of your sons were to rise up and say, "I never heard my father plead with God; I never heard my father read one chapter; I never heard God's worship spoken of by my father with Joy or gladness: I never heard my father speak of true religion with any other spirit than a sneer; and I rarely ever knew my father to speak of our minister and his life work otherwise than with the coldest criticism." With such grave evidence possible from any child's lip, at once, through him mighty to save, confess your madness, get grace from on high for your great priestly work, and then in the midst of that wondering family group you can face the world and say, "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord."

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THE MOTHER OF THE OLD SCHOOL.

MARTINE lovingly writes, "Our mother's knee was always our familiar altar in infancy and boyhood." God pity the poor child which has no mother's knee where it may whisper prayer. There may be a mother to toil over the fashionable raiment, to toil for the daily food, to toil for entrance into some higher circle of social life; but if no time to start for the cross of Jesus, where is the Christian motherhood? Yet if the stern realities of life bring face to face with utmost need and helplessness, then intense desire must grasp the hand of grace, and at once there is an eternal change in heart life and destiny. And most vividly one of the grand old masters makes the picture immortal; Christiana and her children hand in hand for the celestial city.

THE BITTER YEARS.

"God bless our home," may adorn the wall; but if sin enters, if jealous scowls, if envy stings, then farewell family peace. The loving Hannah has lavished upon her the richest love of a noble husband; but as every rose has its thorn, so there lives no woman without her own special trouble; it may be sacredly hidden, it may be heroically borne; yet it is there. Peniel had its agony of soul concentrated into one night; this tender woman writhed under daily martyrdom for years. Hannah's life was really a hornet's nest, and the nearer the house of God, the more sacred the hour, the more virulent the poison. Had she been a thoughtless, godless woman, life had become an intolerable burden. But in these dark years she has learned the lesson which every suffering woman must ever learn, that intense pain must creep, yea on bleeding knees, until it reaches omnipotent power.

THE SOUL'S AGONY,

Does the child rush in its little whirlwind of trouble to a mother's bosom, there to pour out its sorrow? so what else can this wounded

heart do, but "take it to the Lord in prayer? Crowds may come and go amid the sacred calm of Shiloh; but this weary one lies in unspeakable agony, and wrestles with infinite love. The forms of prayer may satisfy the cold formalist when the calm sunshine shines on the rippling waves,

"But, let the strong temptation rise,
As whirlwinds sweep the sea,
We find no strength to 'scape the wreck.
Save, pitying God, in Thee."

And when the the deck is sinking beneath the feet, who, with a soul, dare sneer, at a loving woman taking a life grip of the hand mighty to save? Only a few weeks ago when a lady was dragged into the crowded boat from the sinking wreck, and there knelt in adoring praise, strong men felt the fitness. Yea, last month, when the shores of Lake Michigan were strewn with those silent timbers, men read, with deepest emotion, that card nailed to one of them; "The ship is fast breaking up; oh God this is dreadful."

Hannah's creed should be every woman's creed; the soul may be walled in, but it can never be roofed over.

THE STRANGE MISUNDERSTANDING.

To the venerable Eli there was a strange fascination in that silent long praying woman.

There may be ready tears from the eloquent pathos of the pulpit; but ah, inexpressibly sacred are all such tears when they come from a burdened heart. Ministers of Christ, here is our inexhaustible empire; to watch for souls in trouble, for the agonized seekers after Jesus. Came not our Master "to heal the broken hearted; to set at liberty them that are bruised." And oh how the heart of womanhood thrills with eternal vitality when she is first supremely conscious of that eternal word; "He loved me and gave Himself for me." So, while an Eli may take one extreme, and sadly trace her fervour to the wine cup; it is just as easy to use tenderest words, as if conversion, before ever conviction has brought in agony to the mercy seat.

But does Hannah bitterly resent the dark suspicion? nay, verily, but with sweet fearless honesty she sweeps it away for ever: No, my lord, it is not the wine of earth drunk in, but the wine of sorrow poured out before the Lord.

THE BURDEN LEFT IN SHILOH.

The burden may be laid down yet taken up again; it may be carried for ever, blighting and cursing to the last hour of life; or it may be joyously left in the hands of the burden bearer. The venerable Eli, when he hears the secret of her silent impassioned worship, is humbled and melted. He is no father confessor to ask for the secret of her sorrow, or even for what she had wept and prayed; nay, he is a man, a father, and a true minister of God. So, were members and ministers to bring their little miserable misunderstandings face to face before the Lord, for one honest hour—oh, what barriers would be burned for ever away. No heart is so tender as that of the gray haired minister, and now Eli is moved, deeply moved, for this noble daughter of sorrow.

He hastens, with broken voice and deepest sympathy, to heal, to bless, and as the peace of God sweeps from heart to heart, there is a great calm. And as he lays his hand upon her head and pleads for the covenant blessing of the God of Israel, we wonder not that the burden of life was left for ever in Shiloh.

Prayer may begin in darkness, but when the peace of God cometh, the soul has its first foretaste of that glorious life, when "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

THE MOTHER'S GRAND LOAN.

There is joy and gladness in Ramah; mother love is sacredly pressing to the heart her first born, and dreaming of a name which shall be sacred for ever. What is baptism? Not the giving of a name, but the giving of a life; asked of God, heard of God, given to God. The happy years have gone, and a striking group is seen in Shiloh; the full heart has come with full hands. The praise may not be as impassioned as the prayer, but it is there: the stream is full to the brim, and running over, with a mother's undying gratitude.

Too often in real life, the heavier the purse; the tighter the purse string is drawn, but here grace has come to give, to give the very best, yea unto the Lord for ever. She may have little gold to give, but she gives her heart, and the heart consecrated, she can sublimely say of her first born, "As long as he liveth he shall be lent unto the Lord." Many may prate about being only God's stewards, but let some cultured daughter, some brilliant son, consecrate themselves to some lowly Chris-

Christian work, then we dare not listen to the words of worldly scorn about such a beggarly ministry. Even the heart of the Christian mother of Knill was wrung with trouble when the son of her many prayers had devoted himself to the far-off work of Christ. What hours of agony in that closet! at last the glorious peace, as she comes out saying, "Now my dear son it is settled, God has given me grace to say to you, go, go my son, go." And then that sacred wedding ring, worn with the toil of forty years, is taken off, placed on his, and her son is God's son for ever, with a mother's whole-souled benediction. And long after, as he comes back and kneels in the same room, we hear him whispering, "Blessed be God for a praying mother."

THE MOTHER'S BLESSING.

She has many of them now, but she cannot forget the absent one. These absent ones, what mother can forget. All over Christendom busy mothers find sacred toil in those little coats for the loved ones far away, But the mother heart has many a silent telegram that God may save, may guide, may bless the absent ones. The mother of a Byron may drive her sensitive child from her presence as a "lame brat;" the mother of a Samuel fills his soul with love and consecration. Shall we trace the history of a Byron in life and influence? nay, we draw the veil, and read, instead, of a Samuel: 'He worshipped, he ministered, he grew, and the Lord was with him.' The spikenard of Mary, the garments of Dorcas, the loving words of Priscilla, are still living inspirations wherever Christian women are. So praying sons, working sons, honoured sons, are God's abiding benedictions wherever there are Christian mothers.

The benediction may come from Shiloh or from Canada: and come it must, as surely as the Lord hath said it. A veteran missionary is dying in far away China; they ask in broken whispers, have you any message for the loved ones far away; life makes its last effort; "Tell my old mother I thank God she led me to Jesus."

Thousands, with heart-felt love, can look to a Christian mother, perhaps a sainted one; her well-worn Bible, her well-known arm-chair, her loving faith, her many self-denials, her life-long example, and they softly whisper, "blessed mother." Last month, crouching in a wretched hovel in our Queen City, you hear that wreck of womanhood moan-

ing, "Oh, that I were a child at my mother's knee." Once the queenly daughter of wealth, once the leader of fashion; but now when the hurried inquest lifts the curtain of life, what a revelation of pitiable ruin! Ah, sin, fashionable sin, cruel sin, can tear from a mother's knee and sink to uttermost depths. But grace, blessed grace, grace burning in a godly mother's heart is omnipotent with God; and a Samuel is consecrated, and kept, and used, an honor and a blessing to his mother and his mother's God for ever.

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HELP FROM THE CHARIOT OF FIRE.



HE last grip of the death-cold hand ! He was your father. Son can you forget it ?—No.

That last look of intense love ; thy wife's. Dare you doubt the heart's affection ?—No, never.

That last whisper ! Mother, it was thy child as she nestled in thy bosom for the last time ere God took her. Can you ever forget it ? I know you cannot.

To-day we look on the last journey of Elijah and Elisha. One glance and the scene lies before us—Gilgal, Bethel, Jericho. What memories of devotion and heroism, of omnipotence and mercy, linger among their ruins. But the visit of Elijah concerns not sacred ruins, but living men and national destiny, These schools of the prophets were near to Elijah's heart, and once more he must visit them.

Somehow they have learned that Jehovah is about to remove their great teacher, and with wrapt gaze and hushed solemnity they listen to his parting counsels. The nation's God and the nation's need ; and the few living words about blessing, duty and aspiration are burned into their memories for ever. Amid bowed heads he passed out and on, and they feel that eternity is before him ; and stern life work before them. Following our text we see,

FIRST—THE TWISTED MANTLE.

These last words will cheer these young men in the darkest hours in their after-battle of life, when, amid worldliness and idolatry, they contend for the God of Israel.

But the speaker passeth on ; he is eastward and homeward bound. You have heard of the lordy eagle painfully reaching its rocky eyrie only to die. Then why should not the prophet long to reach Gilead ? Life's great work is in its last hour, but that hour can only come in his

native Gilead. They reach the Jordan, but how cross it? To-day, neither bridge nor ford nor boat is needed. The man whose public life so nobly opened, must leave one more memorial of God-given power behind him. Mark the strange mantle, in a moment taken from the shoulder; then twisted as a staff. With sinewy force he strikes, and lo! there is a passage for these two men. 'Twas faith teaching the sublime, and then passing calmly on. In these Bible telegrams we learn little about the means, but this we can learn, that any weapon is a mighty power in the hands of a true man of God. Are you nearing the end of the valley of death? Look up and say, "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Shrinking soul, are you saying, Oh, how can I cross the dark deep river? Smite it with the robe of Christ's righteousness, and in a moment you stand safe on the heavenward side.

SECOND—THE DISCIPLES FAR-REACHING PRAYER.

How like Elijah that parting counsel, ask what I shall do for thee. It was a strange suggestion to make; but his great soul yearned for the welfare of the man who had been so true and loyal. 'Twas a strange answer that of Elisha too, and it has often been as strangely understood. Not lordly wealth, not twice the power to work miracles, not doubly to excel Elijah in speech or power or deed. The worldly heart is ever judging by its own standard, by its own stereotyped prayers. Oh God, give me success, is the prayer of the worldling every day in the year. And when prosperity swells the bank account, then there is the vulgar ostentation. Yea, God Himself is patronized once a week with studied affectation. Elisha had slain every such thought long ago. Yonder among the charred remains of plough and yoke on his father's farm lie the ashes of selfishness. But he prays, that before the court and nation he may be recognized heir and successor of the departed prophet. He prays that he, the weaker, may have double grace given for his arduous work. And this age specially needs such prayers.

Young men, are you conscious, of your weakness to face temptation and sin? Then pray as Elisha did for a double portion of God's grace. Trust in God and do the right. Elisha must now stand in the front rank. Truly it was a perilous place, but his was the noblest choice, the wisest prayer, the true man can make.

THIRD—THE CHARIOT OF FIRE FOR THE PROPHET OF FIRE.

They have left the Jordan far below. As heart is unbosomed to heart they ascend through many a dark and rugged gorge. They reach at length yon noble height, for life and living it must have been a marvel of ever changing beauty; and for death, with every battle-ground and every victory full in view, how fit the spot. But suddenly they are separated. Not by some foul sin, not by some bitter estrangement, not by yawning chasms, but by a heaven-sent chariot of fire. And whose eye can follow that chariot? Ah, not ours. One adoring glimpse, and then gone for ever. One moment's transformation, and mortality is swallowed up of life. Yes, life; but life eternal, hid with Christ in God. Here, below, some part at the Church door, and never meet again; others part on the railway platform for the last time; some part by a hallowed death-bed, and never meet till at the bar of God; others are torn apart amid the horrors of the battle-field; or yonder in the harvest field you see the father stricken by the lightning's flash, and the poor son mercifully spared, staggering home with ashen face, with the sore, sad news: Mother, Fa— Father is—is dead.

But behold Elisha! Yonder he stands, spell-bound; sonly reverence can only adore; my Father, my Father. But when the glory is past and the calm blue heaven above is seen, then a living faith takes absolute possession. Elijah may be gone; the chariot of fire may be gone, but Jehovah the Lord of Israel liveth.

Prayer is answered, and that doubly. There is not only the one wondrous glimpse, but lo, there falls the very mantle of the prophet itself. To the one, the mantle is exchanged for the robe and the palm and the crown. To the other, prayer is answered beyond the fondest hope; and thus accredited, back he journeys, God's ambassador to fallen Israel.

Finally, two lessons may be hastily gleaned from the prophet's life. First—What a comfort to the much afraid. Did Elijah ever flee from duty? Never tremble upon the verge of despair! Yet he was saved, so as by fire. Second—What hope to the traveller near the journey's end. One may pass into heaven God knows how, another by the cloud, another in angel's bosom, another by the whirlwind; but no matter where, no matter how, if only saved at last. Safe at home by Jesus Christ, the only one able to save to the uttermost.

THE FOUNTAIN PURIFIED.

IT is a great pity. Yes, sir, it is a great drawback. Such words we have heard in every village in Canada, wherever we have listened to busy men eager after temporal prosperity. But what is the great drawback? In one place it is the want of business energy among the leading men to encourage local enterprise. In another place it is the want of railway accommodation—only give us that and no fear of prosperity. In another place, the one fatal want is water-power—only give us the music of the spindle and the forge, and every rival must be far out-distanced. But any town may have all these, and yet there may be some fatal want. There may be want of heart as well as want of brain; there may be want of spirituality as well as want of enterprise. Yea, God's blessing may be wanting in the very midst of overflowing prosperity. Men of the world, over every ledger, every factory, write in letters of burnished gold, "Holiness unto the Lord." If not, then thy history must be written thus: a few years of inflated prosperity, and then eternal beggary. Our visit to the fountain of Jericho suggests—

First—There may be drawbacks to earthly blessing. Jericho lay in an almost paradise. There you find perpetual summer smiling amid ever glorious scenery. It was a noble centre for business; it lay directly upon the great caravan route between the east and west. Yea, in addition there was in it a most flourishing school of the prophets, opening the way to the highest culture of the age. The men of Jericho were fully conscious of all these advantages, hence they speak of the surroundings of their city with an honest pride. How refreshing this, instead of running down their country and its blessings. It is Christianlike to try and leave the world better than we found it. But they were just as fully alive to all their wants. Again what a lesson to the thousands careless, insensible, or recklessly defiant. —There was plenty

of water in the fountain for plain and garden and city, but ah, it, was naught. So there may be plenty of religion, so called, in the land but it is possible that much of it may be inhuman or ungodly. So while the site of their city was well chosen, yet on every side barrenness. Life may pride itself upon its honesty, morality or etiquette, but if the soul has nought else then : life is a mournful failure. The true man daily breathing vital godliness seeks the very highest measure of life. But mark the men of Jericho were not content to let evils alone. They reason thus : there is a prophet of God amongst us; if God can do anything for us, let us at once implore his aid. Yes men of Jericho, "Seek and ye shall find."

Second—The strange chemical agent.— We have no marked cards here in the hands of a veteran astrologer. We have no loaded dice in the hands of an astute magician. Your Egyptian magicians can only imitate other and better men. Jehovah's acts are unique, and each stands out clearly in its own finished beautiful originality. What, says the scoffer, add salt to such brackish water to make it pure ! Who ever heard such folly ? Patience, sir, and study Divine chemistry in the midst of nature's strange combinations. If God can create, God can purify. What, asks flippant sarcasm, can your dull sermons transform man ? No, they cannot. But if living and loving truth comes in the newness of the Holy Spirit, mark the change. But you mark the work given to the men of Jericho. They must bring the new cruse; they must fill it with salt. Yes, there are things that God will not do, there are things that man must do. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and the King of glory shall come in. Open the doors of thine impure heart, let Jesus enter in all His fulness, and we have no fear of the result.

Third—Religion at the Fountain Head. There is no use to trouble these children with religion; how can they understand its mysteries ? No, it is time enough when manhood comes. Ah, but are you sure that such manhood will come ? Mothers, I never knew a child disgusted with the wondrous story of the cross. Make the household song the old, old story of Jesus and his love, and you will have many a care and fear the less. Elisha went to the fountain head with the salt. Purify the stream.—Change first the heart, and then no trouble with the life. You may shape and prune the branches to your heart's

content, but unless the tree is well grafted all the labor may be thrown away upon a worthless, tasteless crab. No doubt, to the men of Jericho salt would seem to be the very last thing to purify their fountain. Well might they say, we have salt enough in the Dead Sea. But wisely they held their peace; there was no rash judgment of God until they knew the result. So even yet, the very means which men may laugh at; may be God's chosen means to change the whole current of man's eternal life.

Fourth—Blessings to the Earnest Seeker. Jericho is never noted as a city of saints. Still they had their traditions both of woman's faith and of Jehovah's power. Now, in their troubles they have brains enough to think of God. You go with the eager crowd to the fountain; the salt is cast in; in a moment you taste the change. Has the salt done it! No, the change is wrought by the Omnipotent power of the God of Israel. True, there is a change, but how long will it last? God's love is not from the cradle to the grave. No, it is from eternity to eternity. You mark that sin: around it there is barrenness, after it for ever the bitter dregs. You mark that seed falling into the eager seeking soul, on every side the waving harvests, thirty, sixty, one hundred fold. Men of God, there are evil fountains nearer home than Jericho. Cast God's salt into them, and as you cast; cry, create in me and in them a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Further—Is there a God? The men of Jericho saw his power and felt his goodness, and with living faith and deepest gratitude they believed in a God of Infinite Goodness.

But finally—Of what use are God's Ministers? Just to take God's texts and fill weary troubled hearts with them; so that there may be joy forever, and fruitfulness forever, and glory to God forever.

HELP FOR THE LADY OF SHUNEM.

NOW touching that mournful cry of Job—"Oh that I were as when the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were about me." The storm sweeps by in its awful power, and what is left for history? Wreck and ruin, desolation and bereavement, vacant chairs, and silent graves. Disease summons from the cradle, from the side, from business, or from sin, to the bar of God. Heap on your life Insurance premiums. Is life safe and sure for to-morrow? No: to-morrow is God's. Fathers can your weak arms keep death at bay? Mothers, can your fondest love shield from the barbed arrow? Shepherds, can you so tend your flocks that not even one lamb shall be smitten? Ah, no; death strikes the loved one down, and the even tenor of life is broken forever. That gravestone is a milestone of life which shall never be forgotten. That first death in the household works an epoch in the household which no father, no mother, can ever forget. It may be only a child's grave, but graven above it forever you read—"Sacred to the memory of——."

Four facts are before us to-day :

FIRST—THE STRICKEN FLOWER.

The years have quickly passed in Shunem. Child laughter fills all the great house with sunny melody; the father renews his youth amid the prattle of his first-born; the mother's cup is full of holiest joy. For years no cloud disturbs the family sky; the seasons come and go, and promise only hope and peace. But suddenly, without one moment's warning you listen to the cry of trouble. Where is it? Yonder in the harvest field. What is it? Ah, a moan of mortal agony—"My head, father, my head!" Gently he is borne homeward. Where shall they lay him? Where but nearest the great heart of his trembling mother. You mark the symptoms; you feel the pulse; you note

the utter prostration. In a tremulous whisper you say—"Ah, there is no hope." True; but say it very gently. See you not the ashen face, the quivering, sore stricken mother? Everything is done that love can do, that skill can suggest. Broken ejaculations from a mother's lips are breathed to Heaven. But all is of no avail. At last the bitter end came. He sat on his mother's knees till noon, and then died. And even as David mourned, so may that mother have mourned,—“O, my son Absalom? would God I had died for thee; O, Absalom, my son, my son!”

SECOND—THE BROKEN STORY.

Whose funeral is that in the grave yard to-day? Oh, only some little child. Yet trifter, the death of one child, may be the death of a thousand fondest hopes and plans. How unspeakable the loss of the bereaved mother over her dead first born. You cannot sympathize with her unless you have been bereaved like her. But one frail thread of hope is left, and to that the mother clings in heart-broken agony, it is the magic words—"Elisha, Elisha." With Martha and Mary of Bethany there was one thought—"Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." The woman of Shunem has lost her son, but, thank God, she has not lost her faith. But there is not one moment to be lost. The fleetest beast is saddled. What matters the fierce sun, or those long twenty miles before her? On, on, with all speed to Carmel. The mother's head feels no weakness, knows no weariness. How she got through that journey she never rightly knew. One thought filled her, and carried her on; the only help on earth is with the man of God in Carmel. Give us living love, and no seeking or serving God is ever wearisome. Elisha may have been the last to perceive the one want in the great house, but he is the first to see the swift steps of the soul in trouble. Gehazi may run to meet her at his masters bidding, but can he understand her or help her? No. Then waste not one moment. On, on, to the man of God with the breaking heart. She clasps the prophet's feet, with streaming eye, with broken voice, she sobs—"My son, my son," Did Elisha feel; Ah, there is no heart so tender as the heart of the true man of God. Yet Gehazi would drag her away, would dare to rebuke. Ah, there were Pharisees then as there are Pharisees still, who dare to condemn with one sweep the tears of the sinner, the mercy of the Saviour. Sharply,

sternly, Elisha speaks—"Let her alone;" and at once Gehazi abashed withdrew, and leaves the agonized mother to tell the sad, sad story of that one fatal day. Avaunt, every Gehazi, and let the heart-broken soul go straight as an arrow to the feet of Jesus.

THIRD—THE USELESS STAFF.

The moment the story of death is told the command is given—"Take this staff, Gehazi, and run and lay it upon the face of the child. Lose not one moment saluting any man; straight to the house of mourning. God's express messengers have no time for idle ceremony, they are on the King's business and that demands urgent haste. God's ministers must give up much which is allowable to other men. Denying self, their own life-work is to rouse the dead; to cheer the downcast. To the very letter Gehazi obeys; for one short day he is a great man, on an errand of life or death. For a few hours a great man, but for all life a small soul. But will the staff even of Elisha satisfy the agonized mother? No. Can she follow in faith a Gehazi? No; she would rather die at the feet of Elisha. That mother's pleading can take no denial; her faith conquers; and Elisha at once sets out with the overjoyed heart to the house of death. But about Gehazi? Ah, yonder he is coming back. Surely he is crestfallen. Ah, well he may, he can only report utter failure. Doggedly, gruffly, he reports—"The child is not awaked." And you hear him saying in his heart, "Nor he never will be awaked." The reason of failure is very simple, the moment Elisha resolved to go himself there was no more use for the staff.

FOURTH—WRESTLING BY THE DEATH-BED.

When Jesus entered the door of Jairus, the mourners ceased their wailing, listened to His word for a moment, and then laughed Him to utter scorn. So even to-day if you speak of the resurrection some laugh at the very thought. The glory so called of their shallow, hopeless, Christless creed is that man has no soul. Let those who like it worship annihilation; we believe in an eternal weight of glory. Ah, said one, there may be a God; but as for me, I intend to spend my Sabbaths settling the accounts in my ledger. Just so will God spend the day of judgment, settling accounts. But mark Elisha: his first act, when he enters his own chamber, the death chamber, is prayer. And what a prayer! It was nerved with regal faith; it was winged

with boundless trust; he pleads for that stricken mother in her awful sorrow as man never pled for woman; he pleads the promise of God given in those bygone years, given in that very room, with all the intensity of his being. Yea, if prayer, there is also living contact with the dead. Yes, living religion must grasp dead man as well as pray for him. And lo the change; the pulse feebly beats, there is a little warmth, the eye is not so glassy; but is nature left to do the rest? No, verity. Again he prays, again encouraged he pleads, for the covenant mercies of the living God. And now, wonder of Divine mercy, the eye opens as if from a sweet child sleep; yes, the child lives, and nestles lovingly in the bosom of the man of God. Once more the mother clasps Elisha's feet; but ah, not now in speechless sorrow, but in tearful wonder and in speechless joy. And there that happy group, as they gather around the family altar to adore and glorify the God of Israel; are heard singing to some grand old melody the Communion psalm of the Church universal: "Bless the Lord, O my soul! and all that is within me bless His holy name; who redeemeth our life from destruction, who crowneth us with loving kindness and tender mercies; blessed be His holy name for ever and ever."

FINALLY.

Mothers when dread sickness shadows the household, seek not only the physician's remedies, the earnest prayer of the Christian minister, but especially cry to the Father of Fathers. God will never do wrong to a believing soul. Mothers, in our quiet Churchyard there are many little graves. There are yours, there are mine; we have laid them down in tears, but through Jesus we will yet clasp them to the soul in unending joy. You visit your little graves in the stillness of the Sabbath morning, and as you stand beside them the silent tears fall like precious gems on the grassy sod. Yet by Christian faith your soul is lifted up, and you see them in the Father's bosom, shrined in glory, and there is not only a living gratitude for, but a personal interest in, Jesus Christ the Resurrection and the Life. And you enter the door of the Sanctuary for another Sabbath's sacred worship, saying to your soul with hushed voice, "'Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all."

PATRIARCHAL HELP.



ABRAHAM "the Friend of God," has long passed away, but what a glorious memory, what a noble example is left behind. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." As every age sweeps past, what an honoured array of venerable patriarchs from pew and from pulpit pass before us. Their years may have been spent in the largest sphere of life or in the quietness of some lowly circle, yet 'tis life for God, potent for eternal good. And still the veterans of the old guard pass from us, one by one. Ripe in holiest experience, chastened by fierce temptation, magnifying abounding mercy, waiting in assured hope, they pass beyond. But "their works do follow them," the solemnity of the patriarch priest at a family altar, the earnest words of fatherly counsel, the many years of godly example, these cannot be soon forgotten. No, they are woven into the very soul of being: they remain sacred memories for ever. In our midst, another Abraham (Abraham Rowand, Sr.) has walked with reverent footsteps, and finished a Christian life that will not easily be forgotten. To-day, we would with a warm heart, briefly review twenty-one years of life, the last of his four score and eight, he spent among us.

Whatever may be the size of the cairn, we will lay one stone upon it, in memory of one of the noblest men of God we have ever known in Canada.

I—HE WAS A MAN FULL OF GOD'S BIBLE.

No man can ever become a great Christian, unless he has drunk deeply at the fountain head. Whatever our culture may be, whether toned by the classic past, or by the scientific present, yet what is it worth for holy living or holy dying, unless filled with the very essence of the Book of God. Few men knew more of its power for a vigorous Christian life. And few knew more of its comfort for bereavement and

old age. But this knowledge did not make him a narrow-minded bigot.

No, but we ever found him in his years of mental prime, thoroughly abreast of all the great questions of the day, whether political or religious. But as the years rolled on, and the eternal verities of life drew nearer, then the day came when he told us that he had done with them all; "There is just one book for me now," he more than once has said, and when even the palsied hand could hold it no longer, yet the very many golden texts he had stored in his memory were fresh to the very last, "rejoicing the heart." How different an aged Christian full of the sweetest promises, from a starving worldling, vainly trying to grasp the world fled forever.

II.—HE WAS A MAN OF FERVENT PRAYER.

'Tis no small boon to hear a venerable patriarch's prayers. With him prayer was a great reality. Whatever he may have been to others to me he was always a man of very great power in prayer. There was an unction that came from the heart, telling of the soul that was off in the audience of the King.

Fathers, are you priests for God in your own households, and does your every child feel, if ever there is a man of prayer, my father is that man? Often, have earnest Christian wives come to me, and told me with tearful eye, "Oh, if my husband would only begin family worship." Is there one such man here to-day? then away with all fear, all false pride. Your sentences may be broken, the grammar may be faulty, but to every Christian mother, worthy of the name, it will be heaven begun. I have stood by many a death-bed, but I never heard from human tongue the regret, I have prayed too much. Fathers, to-day I plead with you, be men of Christ-like life, be men fervent in prayer.

III.—HE WAS A MAN SIGNALLY USEFUL IN CHRIST'S CHURCH.

I never heard him pleading to be excused from giving, because he had liberally given for the same work in another church. And yet in the street, Toronto; in Chinguacousy; in Free St. John's, Walkerton, he was neither last nor least. His was no selfish religion; nay, it was intensely practical.

Many a word spoken in season, many a kindly deed quietly done,

tells of his sterling worth. In each of these three churches, he was ever foremost in far-seeing plans and active Christian work. 'Tis not in the length of communion rolls, but in the vigor of consecrated hearts, that we find the secret of successful churches. And when old age laid him aside from active life, we ever felt that we had his fervent prayer and warmest sympathy in every work done for the Master.

Such was the man of whom our late much-loved friend, Dr. Jennings, told us, that when he left his church in Toronto, "He sat down in his study and had a good hearty cry." Yes, men of God are sorely missed.

IV.—HE WAS A MAN OF GREAT LIBERALITY.

No one ever knew how much he gave. Though I know that for years his giving was the largest amongst us, yet I never knew all.

To him giving was a pleasure, but one that no one ever heard him speak about. Alas ! it is a pitiable form of religion which spends its strength telling others, "how much I have given to the church." The liberal soul deviseth liberal things, yea, and carries them out. Our second church had never been built when it was but for him. And his was the first gift, to lay the foundations of our present noble building.

More than once in the days of our past weakness; interest on loans, justly his, was generously given back. He never entered the house of God without a generous collection, and when he had it not, we know that he often borrowed it. For many years he paid for, and gave me, the first reading of Spurgeon's Sermons, which at his leisure, he read again and again with the greatest zest. Truly of him it could be well said, "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age."

V.—HE WAS A MAN OF GREAT SPIRITUAL HUMILITY.

You may not be able to tell where the fountain-head of some well-known river may be found, but if you see it for twenty-one years steadily flowing, you never dream of doubting its existence. It is full to the brim to-day, it is in wonted volume by-and-by; so is it, in every Christian life.

The measure of the soul's rise is the measure of the soul's fall. 'Twas thus with him. We have often cheered him in deepest darkness; we have often rejoiced with him; when his joy seemed as fresh as if he

had newly passed from darkness into the glorious light. But who more respected in this church? I know of none. Never shall we forget an incident of our early ministry, and the way he treated it.

Being away the most of the week on Presbyterial work, there had been used in the sermon on the following Sabbath, more scholarly words than the wont, yet when he asked the reason, it was done so humbly, so tenderly, that it was a pleasure to explain. Cold-hearted criticism always forgets, "That God giveth grace to the humble."

'So let me pass away, humbly and lovingly,
Only remembered by what I have done.'

VI.—HE WAS A MAN OF NOBLE STEADFASTNESS.

His ordination vow as a Christian elder did not mean till he got tired of his church or his minister; no, it meant with him, till death do us part.

His promise had it in such intense vitality of honesty, that it was unbreakable. His religion meant life-long stability to God and man.

Happy is the minister who can say of all his elders: I never once doubted one of them. Neither did I ever once doubt, that he was a man of God. "By their fruits ye shall know them." No worldling could have lived such a life as his. How sad to see a gray-haired man with one foot in the grave, and the other clinging to the ever shifting sand.

With him, it was the glorious Rock of Ages. And amid all religious fickleness, what a noble sight to see elder and minister working zealously together for twenty-one years, without one jar, faithful unto death.

To-day, I can fearlessly say of him, he never gave me one moment's pain, but often, very often, he strengthened my hands in God. Oh fathers, I plead with you so to live, that when your sons may stand tearfully around your open grave, they may honestly say in their heart of hearts, "I thank God that I had such a father."

FINALLY.

A grand old standard-bearer has fallen. Who will grasp the flag? His voice cries, "Do not let that old flag go down." Who will follow

his example ! Be men in blood-earnest, and the Master will give you grace and strength. Who will carry on his work ? Let every son and father here to-day gird himself afresh, and say, "God helping me, I will." And then, when devout men may carry us one by one silently and solemnly to God's acre, they may triumphantly say, "to-day we buried a father, every inch a man and every inch a Christian."

"Be Holy,

And each word of thine shall be a fruitful seed ;

Speak Holy,

And thy thoughts shall some soul's famine feed ;

Live Holy.

And thy life shall be a grand and noble creed."